

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GABORO 01140 232145Z

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0000

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY

AMCONSUL HOHANNESBURG PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1140

LIMDIS

MAPUTO FOR AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S DELEGATION

VIENNA FOR VICE PRESIDENT

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MASS UK RH BC

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT KHAMA

REF: 1) STATE 112946, 2) GABORONE 1123

1. SUMMARY: THE LATEST RHODESIAN ARMED INCURSION MAY 16 INTO BOTSWANA HAS LEFT THIS GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE SHOCKED AND DISTURBED. THE GENERAL FEELING HERE WAS THAT THE BORDER TENSIONS HAD SUBSIDED SINCE JANUARY DUE TO RHODESIAN RECOGNITION (A) THAT GOB, BEING WITHOUT ARMED FORCES, COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO CONTROL ITS BORDERS AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GABORO 01140 232145Z

MOVEMENTS OF NATIONALIST FREEDOM FIGHTERS, AND (B) THAT GOB WAS FAITHFULLY CARRYING OUT ITS DECLARED POLICY OF DISARMING NATIONALISTS AND DENYING THEM OPERATIONAL BASES ON BOTSWANA TERRITORY. CONFRONTED BY THE REALITY OF BOTH THE RHODESIAN INCURSION AND ABSENCE OF ANY GOB MILITARY STRENGTH, THERE WAS JUSTIFIED CONCERN HERE AS TO WHAT GOB MIGHT FEEL OBLIGED TO DO IN ITS OWN DEFENSE --

PARTICULARLY IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH COOL HEADS AS FONMIN MOGWE (IN MAPUTO) AND SECURITY ADVISOR PHIL STEENKAMP (TRAVELING IN THE INTERIOR). AT MAY 18 MEETING PRESIDENT KHAMA REFLECTED GOB CONCERNS, EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR MESSAGE OF SUPPORT AND RENEWED REQUEST FOR ARMS. HE ALSO COMMENTED ON USG POLICY RE SAG EMERGING FROM MONDALE-VORSTER TALKS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE DEPARTMENT'S PROMPT REACTION (REF A) IN FORM OF STRONG MESSAGE OF SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT FOR GOB, AND STIFF REPROACH TO RHODESIANS, GAVE GOB IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST AND WAS WELCOME FOLLOW-UP TO CALLAGHAN MESSAGE. THERE REMAINED A CONSIDERABLE CONCERN HERE, HOWEVER, ABOUT WHAT GOB STRONG DESIRE TO OBTAIN ARMS AND EQUIPMENT MIGHT LEAD IT TO DO.

3. SUCH WAS GENERAL ATMOSPHERE I FOUND UPON RETURNING HERE MAY 17 FROM COM CONFERENCE. WHILE I HAD INTENDED TO REQUEST MEETING WITH PRESIDENT KHAMA IN ANY EVENT, THE CIRCUMSTANCES PROMPTED ME TO ASK TO SEE HIM ASAP. A TIME WAS SET FOR 3:15 P.M., MAY 18.

4. IN COURSE OF OVER AN HOUR'S PRIVATE DISCUSSION, HE REVIEWED EVENTS ON RHODESIAN BORDER (IN TERMS WHOLLY CONSISTENT WITH REF B), EXPRESSED BAFFLEMENT AS TO WHY SMITH ATTACKED WHEN AND WHERE HE DID (KHAMA HAD NO DOUBT THE ORDER CAME FROM SALISBURY) AND THANKED US WARMLY FOR OUR MESSAGE OF SUPPORT (REF A). THE BEST INDICATION OF HIS APPRECIATION WAS HIS REQUEST
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GABORO 01140 232145Z

TO MAKE THE MESSAGE PUBLIC AS SOON AS POSSIBLE; HE FELT THIS WOULD GIVE IT THE MAXIMUM IMPACT.

5. IN REPLY I SAID OUR INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED NO GUIDANCE EXCEPT THAT THE MESSAGE (WHICH DCM DELIVERED ORALLY TO HIS ADMIN SECRETARY TIBONE) WAS LABELED "TALKING POINTS". IN VIEW OF HIS OBVIOUS AND PRESSING INTEREST, I DID NOT CONTRADICT PRES. KHAMA WHEN HE SAID HE THEREFORE ASSUMED HE COULD MAKE THEM PUBLIC. (RADIO BOTSWANA CARRIED A PARAPHRASE OF MESSAGE SENT REF A ON SUCCESSIVE NEWS BROADCASTS THAT EVENING.) IN ADDITION, MY NEW UK COLLEAGUE, HICOM WILFRED TURNER, SAID MAY 18 TIBONE HAD CALLED A STAFF MEMBER THAT SAME DAY ASKING IF PRIMIN CALLAGHAN'S MESSAGE TO PRES. KHAMA COULD BE RELEASED. UK HICOM RECIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM LONDON SAYING PRIMIN'S MESSAGE COULD BE PUCLICIZED BUT IN PARAPHRASE AND NOT AS PERSONNAL MESSAGE.

6. PRES. KHAMA'S KEEN INTEREST IN THE U.S. MESSAGE OF SUPPORT, AS REFLECTED ABOVE, IS THE BEST TESTIMONY OF ITS IMPORTANCE IN PROVIDING REASSURANCE AT A TIME OF NEED (A FEELING I SOUGHT TO REINFORCE). AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED, PRES. KHAMA LAMENTED GOB DEFENSELESS AND REFERRED TO GOB REQUEST (GABORONE 739 AND 929) FOR ARMS (600 RIFLES) AND EQUIPMENT (VEHICLES AND RADIOS) FOR BASIC NEEDS OF NEW BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE, A REQUEST HE HAD PERSONNALLY ESPOUSED AND SECONDED IN MARCH 31 CONVERSATION WITH ME. I SAID THE COM CONFERENCE HAD REVEALED A USG MOOD OF "EXTREME RELUCTANCE" RE ARMS TRANSFERS. HOWEVER, BOTSWANA'S REQUEST HAD NOT BEEN DISMISSED AND WAS UNDER STUDY. MANY QUESTIONS AND HURDLES REMAIN; INDEED PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD HAVE TO APPROVE A FINAL DECISION TO GRANT CREDITS FOR ANY ARMS SALES. STILL, ONE COULD TAKE SOME COMFORT FROM THE FACT THAT THE INITIAL REACTION HAD NOT BEEN A FIRM "NO". I
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 GABORO 01140 232145Z

ADVANCED THE SUGGESTION THAT U.S. DIPLOMATIC AND MORAL SUPPORT, AS EVIDENCED BY OUR MESSAGE (REF A), COULD BE REGARDED AS AN IMPORTANT DETERRENT TO FURTHER RHODESIAN INCURSIONS AND SAID I HOPED THE (PRES. KHAMA) FELT SOMEWHAT REASSURED BY IT. HE REPLIED THAT HE INDEED FOUND IT ENCOURAGING; HENCE HIS DESIRE TO PROMPTLY PUBLICIZE IT. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD REPORTS, ON WHICH HE WAS AWAITING CONFIRMATION THAT AFTERNOON, THAT RHODESIAN FORCES WERE AGAIN GATHERING ON THE BORDER WITH BOTSWANA.

7. MODALE-VORSTER TJLKS. TURNING TO OTHER SUBJECTS, I ASKED IF HE HAD FOCUSSED ON SECRETARY VANCE'S MAY 3 LETTER TO FONMIN MOGWE CONCERNING THE TALKS BETWEEN V.P. MODALE AND PM VORSTER. PRES KHAMA SAID HE HAD LOOKED IT OVER AT THE TIME. I HAD A COPY OF THE LETTER AND READ SEVERAL KEY PASSAGES TO HIM, NOTING THE STRESS ON CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA ITSELF. PRES. KHAMA COMMENTED THAT HE FELT SURE FORSTER WOULD REACT AS EX-FONMIN MULLER AND OTHER RANKING SAG OFFICIALS HAD REACTED WHEN BOTSWANA HAD PROTESTED AGAINST RACISM AND APARTHEID IN THE PAST, NAMELY BY SAYING IN ESSENCE "WE TOO WANT CHANGE BUT CAN'T IGNORE OUR CONSTITUENCY". PRES. KHAMA SAID IF THE USG COULD MAKE THE SAG BELIEVE IT REALLY MEANT WHAT IT SAID, THEN CHANGE MIGHT WELL BE ACCELERATED. THE REASON: IF THE U.S. WITHDRAWS ITS SUPPORT, THEN THE SAG KNOWS IT HAS "NO PLACE TO GO". PRES. KHAMA REPEATED THAT IT WOULD TAKE A SERIOUS AND SUSTAINED EFFORT BY THE US. TO CONVINCE THE SAG THAT THE U.S. HAD ADOPTED A NEW POLICY AND WOULD IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS ABANDON THE SAG AS AN ALLY AGAINST COMMUNISM. KHAMA ASKED TO LET HIM KNOW AS SOON AS I HAD ANYTHING

I COULD GIVE HIM ON VORSTER'S REACTION. ACTION REQUESTED:
ANY READOUT THAT CAN BE PROVIDED ON MONDALE-VORSTER
TALKS WILL PROVIDE WELCOME OPPORTUNITY TO OBTAIN REACTIONS
OF PRESIDENT KHAMA WHO HAS LONG PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN
DEALING WITH SAG AND REFLECTS KEEN GOB NATIONAL INTEREST
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 GABORO 01140 232145Z

AS THE COUNTRY WITH THE LONGEST BORDER WITH SAG.

8. REPORT BY SEPTTEL ON OTHER SUBJECTS COVERED IN OUR
MEETING.
NORLAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETING REPORTS, BORDER INCIDENTS, INVASIONS, MILITARY SALES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 20-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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Disposition Reason:
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TAGS: PFOR, MASS, UK, RH, BC, US, (KHAMA, SERETSE M)
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